

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002720

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: EUR DAS KENNEDY'S MAY 3 MEETING WITH MFA U/S TUYGAN

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Calling on Turkish MFA U/S Tuygan May 3, EUR DAS Kennedy urged continued GOT focus on trafficking in persons and laid out a suggested plan for bilateral consultations through 2005. Tuygan appeared frustrated with the EU. Kennedy urged Turkey to stay positively engaged with the EU, take care in its public rhetoric, and not view the EU as an "enemy." She stressed the importance of religious freedom, including for foreign missionaries. Tuygan tried to assert that religious freedom and missionary activity are different; Ambassador Edelman warned Tuygan this approach is a mistake. Kennedy and the Ambassador stressed the importance of religious freedom issues to bilateral relations. Armenia and Cyprus discussion septel. End Summary.

#### Bilateral Issues

12. (C) DAS Kennedy opened the meeting by thanking Tuygan for the MFA's assistance on the U.S. Incirlik cargo hub request. She and Ambassador Edelman both urged Tuygan to make sure Turkey continues focusing on trafficking in persons issues, including passport inserts and the proposed victims' hotline. Action now is vital, as the U.S. is finalizing its annual TIP report.

13. (C) Kennedy gave Tuygan a list of proposed U.S./Turkey consultations, welcoming any ideas or suggestions Tuygan might have. She suggested that Ambassador Mann could consult with the Turks on Nagorno-Karabakh as well as energy issues, and said the U.S. would be interested in consulting with Turkey on BMENA. Tuygan agreed and said he would let Kennedy know if he had any other proposals.

#### Turkey/EU

14. (C) Tuygan stressed the importance Turkey attaches to relations with the EU, but said EU demands are stirring negative public opinion. Turkey will have to handle the relations carefully, he added. Kennedy said the U.S. hopes Turkey stays actively engaged on the EU despite frustrations. Tuygan asserted that reforms are moving forward; he professed not to understand why there is a perception Turkey had lost vigor in its EU efforts.

15. (C) Ambassador Edelman explained that his EU colleagues in Ankara are having difficulty explaining to their capitals 1) why the GOT has not yet named a lead EU negotiator and 2) anti-EU public statements by GOT officials. Tuygan did not disagree with this assessment. However, the upcoming referendum in France has put a damper on enthusiasm for the EU. People told us to keep a low profile, he added. Moreover, Turkish officials have grounds for their statements, which Tuygan claimed reflect Turkish public opinion about the EU. Tuygan expressed concern about how the ECHR's upcoming decision on the Abdullah Ocalan trial will be received in Turkey.

16. (C) Kennedy urged that the GOT keep its public rhetoric about the EU positive and avoid portraying the EU as an enemy, such as in recent GOT assertions that the EU is seeking with its minority rights policies to "divide" Turkey. We do not consider the EU an enemy, Tuygan averred, but they need to show us that they see us as a partner and engage us in a positive way.

#### Religious Freedom

17. (C) Kennedy told Tuygan that the U.S. and EU both feel strongly about religious freedom issues in Turkey, including the treatment of Protestants and missionaries, and Halki Seminary. State Minister for Religious Affairs Aydin's recent statements depicting missionaries as troublemakers are worrisome and inconsistent with a tolerant state, and have received significant attention in Washington.

18. (C) Tuygan tried to assert that religious freedom and missionary work are different, or at least perceived differently in Turkish public opinion. He said the GOT is "working on" opening Halki Seminary, but he linked Halki to the rights of the Turkish minority in western Thrace, saying

"the public expects reciprocity on the other side of the Aegean."

¶9. (C) Kennedy urged Tuygan not to hold Halki hostage to the situation in western Thrace. Ambassador Edelman warned Tuygan that it is mistake not to consider missionary activity a religious freedom issue. Everyone is trying to convince the EU not to be a "Christian club," and an atmosphere of religious freedom and tolerance in Turkey is important. EU colleagues and the U.S. Congress are concerned about these issues, including the March 11 sermon implying that Christians are polytheists. This is dangerous language and could spark violence against Christians in Turkey, which would cause significant problems with the U.S. and EU. Kennedy mentioned the recent attack on a Protestant church and drew Tuygan's attention to Ambassador Edelman's suggestion that a senior government official visit the site.

¶10. (C) Tuygan tried to insist there is no problem with respect for other religions in Turkey and asserted such respect will continue. However, he added that "active missionary work is a delicate question and should be handled with care at this point." Kennedy told Tuygan Turkey needs make sure the public understands that all religions should be respected, and again stressed how important this issue is for the U.S. and EU.

¶11. (U) DAS Kennedy has cleared this message.  
EDELMAN